

Transcript 153-2

Shea Houdmann

Welcome to the God Questions podcast. Joining me today again is Doctor Sandra Glahn from Dallas Theological Seminary. She's a professor who teaches all sorts of classes in different departments. But one thing that she was particularly passionate about is the role of women in the church. If you've not listened to part one of this where we discussed the issue, kind of more generalities, but with the focus on how churches could be doing better and being more biblical on this issue. But today, we're actually going to dive into the biblical passages that kind of inform our viewpoints on this. So Sandra and welcome back.

Doctor Sandra Glahn

My pleasure. Thanks for having me.

Shea Houdmann

So it's I find it very interesting that you wrote your doctoral work on an aspect of the passage in First Timothy 2. And when I wrote my first master's thesis, I was assigned by the seminars at that time to write it on women in ministry. And obviously first Timothy was a huge focus for me as well. So really interesting to hear the interpretation that God has led you to through your study of the passage. So let me go ahead and dive into that. Before before that let me go ahead and read the passage. Everyone's very familiar with passage we're talking about. First Timothy 2 versus 11 to 12 read, a woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man. She must be silent. In the verses 13 and 14, for Adam was formed first, then Eve, and Eve was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. And then of course I don't have verse 15 right in front of me, but verse 15 talks about, but the women will be saved through childbearing, and I'm sure you can finish that for me.

Doctor Sandra Glahn

If they continue in, yeah, and. Then three character qualities.

Shea Houdmann

And you said the verse 15 is kind of for you become the key for the whole passage, so elaborate on that for me.

Doctor Sandra Glahn

It has and and I'm going to take a risk here and say that it came out of my own story. And the minute I say that, a lot of theologians go well then there's bias. And I just want to say every time we approach Scripture, we're coming out of our own story. So what, what drove me was, I had good mentors who encouraged me in the gifts of teaching. But my husband and I faced 10 years of infertility and pregnancy loss. And sort of the reigning scholars from conservative Christianity at that point, we're saying that what Paul is saying is that women can't teach but they can minister to their children and nuclear family. So all that teaching should be channeled to your nuclear family. And you can imagine how that didn't resonate for a couple of reasons. First of all, I didn't see the nuclear family really is the big key for Paul.

That's that's a really western way of looking at it. But also Paul had told the Corinthians to think about staying single. So that didn't make sense when I thought about maybe a Priscilla who with in partnership with her husband, is having a conversation correcting Apollos. And so I wasn't really satisfied with how biblical it was to be telling women to to channel all of their teaching into their nuclear family. But also it says a woman will be saved through childbearing and I couldn't have children. And I knew that Paul couldn't possibly mean saved eternally because he would be contradicting Paul. But that is just not his view of sin and salvation. So again, some of the more traditional interpreters were saying saved there means sanctified. And I got into seminary, and I never found any use of shall be saved in a sense of being sanctified or disciplined or matured. It was the the phrase shall be saved and I and so I pulled out all the New Testament uses of shall be saved, and they all meant either eternally or they meant physically in terms of physical health, safe from death. So that was interesting to me. And and it was answering the question where do I fit in? I'm willing to be silent the rest of my life as long as I'm sure that that's what God has. But also I have to give account to him for my gifts so I really have to know here, you know, what is it? You go, girl, or you're pushy, broad, like, basically, like, is how it was in my brain.

Doctor Sandra Glahn

One thing that's really interesting to me is the very next line after what we how that chapter ends is the phrase this is a faithful saying. And we often put a colon after that and say if someone aspires to be an elder, that person aspires to a good thing. But I noticed that Paul sometimes said this is a faithful saying before he said the faithful saying, and sometimes he put it after and there was a little bit of a grammatical issue because because the verse didn't actually say women will be saved. It said she. And the Greek is just she will be saved if they continue. Basically continuing the faith. And that's not good grammar, which Paul is a brilliant, brilliant writer, and he knows good grammar. And I found a little note in some of my like my Greek dictionary that some people thought that that was a local saying. That and Paul does have this habit of taking a local saying and then adding but and putting a Christian spin on it, right? Yeah, I can think of it like in Corinthians, it's good for a man not to touch a woman that will put in quotes and then say but let every man have his own woman, right? He does this all the time. And so I wondered is it could this be a local saying? Is there something going on locally?

Doctor Sandra Glahn

Well then I, I'm noticing OK, this is the letter to Timothy. First Timothy, 1:3, says I left you in Ephesus to teach certain people not to teach false doctrine. Do I know anything about what's happening in Ephesus and I don't have to learn archaeology to find that out. All I have to do is go over to Acts and I see there's a big brouhaha in Ephesus. First you have massive magic book burning and then you have this event that happens relating to Artemis of the Ephesians. And you know, the silver workers say Paul is cutting into our trade and he's losing money for us. And for two hours, they're chanting great is Artemis of the Ephesians. And I'm curious who is she at the time of Paul? And so that became my dissertation work to to go to historical evidence. And the people that were vetting me were historians, inscription experts. They didn't even know about the arguments we're having in First Timothy. And honestly, friend, I didn't know where I was going to end up. I just wanted to go where the data would lead. I had visited Ephesus and unfortunately they gave me sort of a synoptic Artemis from the 7th century BC to the 4th century AD. I didn't care who she was for 11 centuries, I just needed to know who she at the time of Paul?

Doctor Sandra Glahn

Well, I'll just cut to the chase after studying Homer and all the back story, just focusing in what do we have from approximately 1st century sources. And Artemis in Ephesus is the goddess of midwifery. Women are praying to her to be delivered in childbearing. And Paul in other places is setting himself up sort of as a midwife. And he does this with the the Thessalonians. And he is addressing the number one fear of women, which is their number one cause of death. Some some say as high as 50% are dying in childbirth. There's no such thing as a cesarean section. There is no such thing as a you know whatever we do to expedite a birth when you've been in labor for 45 hours. And, and so the big fear is that you're either going to die in childbirth or you're not going to die in childbirth and you're going to labor for four or five days before you die. And Artemis, who is believed to either deliver you safely and her name, means Artemus means delivered. Or her arrows were considered to be euthanizing. So kill me painlessly. So either give me a quick death or, you know, kill me painlessly, or deliver me safely.

Doctor Sandra Glahn

And so Paul comes in and he teaches she's she's a God made with hands. So the big test. Of whether you're going to stay with Jesus is childbirth. And I think that that's really interesting that Artemis is also born first, she's a twin with her brother, Apollo. So she is the preeminent one in their creation story. Well, who's the preeminent one in our creation story? It's Adam, he was first. And and so if you are correcting views of people who are worshipping this and she was like the number one goddess in that city. And in fact probably the number two goddess in empire wide, just enormously popular. And so if you're if you're going to follow Christ this is where we put it to the test. Long story short, I think that Paul is actually saying to Timothy in a private letter, the women in your church are not going to die in childbirth if they are trusting in Christ. In the same way that James says, you know, pray have the elders pray and they'll be healed. He's addressing a local situation, but it has ultimate ramifications that are still important for us. But maybe not a one-on-one correlation in the same way that sacrificing, meat sacrifice to our idols doesn't have a one-on-one correlation but definitely has application.

Shea Houdmann

That's excellent. And that that fits really well with one of the most common questions we receive about the passage. But no, it's fascinating in that I mean, obviously I knew about Artemis being prominent in the city of Ephesus. Was not aware that his role went that specifically. So it's very interesting to hear about that, that's was probably what the mindset. This may have been part of the actual saying that even the focus on and Adam was formed 1st and resetting their perspective on how God created and sort of the who was created to be help me to who, who has the preeminence. Not in the sense of learning it over, but just kind of correcting the way some people were were thinking based on that. But maybe the question that we get most often about this is trying to limit what First Timothy 2 is talking about to only Ephesus. For example, people will say, well, since women were so prominent in the worship of Artemis, they were coming to faith in Christ coming into the church, and they were then trying to be the ultimate authoritarian leaders in the Church of Ephesus as well. So Paul is correcting just that specific situation and what he says here does not apply to the church in law at large. So how how do you respond to that particular?

Doctor Sandra Glahn

So the first thing I would say is I don't see anything in all my inscription reading and all my research that suggests that there is that kind of mentality coming out of Artemis worship. There's not like a proto

radical feminism there. But there's also not a hatred of men. You had Artemis mentioned in the New Testament. I found over 100 different forms of the name Artemis that people gave their children. Men, boys and girls alike. So she is definitely worshipped by men and women. She's not just a girl goddess or you know somebody who is worshipped by females. And I think that you said it well, he is correcting a creation story with a creation story. But that doesn't mean that he is saying that there's a principle here of firstness. Right. And I think if you just take the line, Adam was formed first, that is not a principle, right? That's that is just a line from a story that is a true story, and it definitely would put you back down to size if you are saying I'm I'm coming out of a cult that says woman first. But again, not in the sense of a of a radical feminism mentality, but it I think it did have more to do with.

Doctor Sandra Glahn

Well, let me back up. There's another scholar who, Emmendorfer who at the same time I was doing research we didn't know about each other, and he was looking at where do we find in the Book of Ephesians, that is affected by Artemis worship. And you think about Artemis is carrying a bow and arrow. She is the prototype for Wonder Woman. And you have in this spiritual, the section where you put your armor on right, the warfare section, he's talking about the fiery darts. Well, Artemis was all about darts and archery. And it's the only one, as far as I know, it's the only one of the pieces of armor that they're given that isn't a quote from the Old Testament. And then you see all these lines in Ephesians. Here's an example and and this is where I'll get to where it's relevant in a minute because it is, I'll bring it back. In Ephesians I found an inscription where a man was bringing his inheritance to Artemis. And Paul, in Ephesians one says, no. We get an inheritance. We don't have to give up an inheritance. We as believers in Christ, not only do we receive an inheritance. Guess what our inheritance is? God himself. Like and he basically takes on and and you see this both in Ephesians and in First Timothy, it's like using the word kryptonite to talk about Superman, but we don't know what words are Artemis words typically, so we don't see how overt it is. But Paul takes down all of Artemis's titles, and if you combine First and Second Timothy, she's the goddess of the first throne. You got proto in there. She is called God. She is called savior. So taria all over the place. She's called the female equivalent to Lord, and she's even called Lord with the male ending on it. And in every case you just see Paul constantly referring to Jesus Christ with those titles. And so it's not just First Timothy two, it's the whole book that is filled with these references, even women going house to house. Which is the same phrase that Luke uses for the church. So it's not just like girlfriends gossiping with other girlfriends in their houses. The word we've sometimes translated gossip has a connection to magic. And Artemis inscriptions have all kinds of references to magic.

Doctor Sandra Glahn

So what are we saying? Paul is saying my God is bigger than your God. So it's completely misguided to say there is nothing for us in First Timothy two, when he's taking down Artemis worship. But, but to say that women are therefore more deceived than men, that that's what Paul is saying, that doesn't fit his logic right? Because in Second Corinthians he tells the Corinthians I'm concerned for all of you that you'll be deceived as as Eve was. Because it's a human thing to be deceived by evil. And two, and it even doesn't fit as logic of women can't teach because they're with deceived. Because then what's the next question? Well, if Adam full on sinned, you know where's his limitation? At least she thought she was doing the right thing, right? It doesn't quite fit that kind of logic, but it makes perfect sense if he's saying our God is bigger than your God.

Shea Houdmann

I think I remember shortly after I became a Christian hearing of a sermon on this passage. And the pastor was definitely of the women shouldn't teach men, because they are more easily deceived. I was back then, like you make them like that doesn't make sense. So if men are supposedly better at recognizing deceptive teaching, wouldn't it make more sense for women to teach men? And the women are more susceptible, susceptible to deception why would you want women who are more easily deceived to be teaching women who are more easily deceived? See it and then after the children, you are the most easy to deceive of anyone.

Doctor Sandra Glahn

And children who are even more vulnerable? Exactly, exactly.

Shea Houdmann

So just the whole trying to make this passage about women can't teach because their more easily deceived, that's not what Paul said. And that doesn't make any logical sense at all.

Doctor Sandra Glahn

It solves a lot of the questions that it that had raised of of this idea that women can't teach because they're more easily deceived. It didn't seem to fit Paul elsewhere.

Shea Houdmann

When you get into the qualifications for elders and deacons, and the very next passage after this, some view the universal use of male pronouns in the passage up until you get to the point where they're talking about their wives or women serving in leadership role, as a argument for only women, only men can serve as elders. Do you think that's a valid interpretation or, and if so, or if not, why not?

Doctor Sandra Glahn

I suspect that Paul was limiting the word elder to men, but he also outlines very similar qualifications over in Chapter 5 for widows. And church history does bear out that the early church had widows, looks like around the third century they morphed into deaconesses. And that's part of why we don't see women deacons in the early centuries of the church. An interesting piece of research that's been done recently in I think it's Cappadocia is that they're finding tombstones around an ancient church and they've had the inscriptions, the widow of the Church of, widow of the Church of, in histories of the past but they were a bunch of widows buried together till they started noticing in the same graveyard Widow of Sylvanus. And so widows of the Church of Cappadocia, let's say are are different from people who have been the wives of these men. And so I suspect Artemis is also a virgin goddess and I think that accounts for why there are so many single women in the church that Paul has to divide them into 3 or 4 categories. You got your, you know, the younger widows need to get married and have children, which is not what he says over in Corinth. Right in Corinth, he's saying think about staying single. But in Ephesus? I actually want you to get married and have children. And then if you have family who can support you, great. Everybody who's raised family and doesn't have support, we're going to put you on the rolls. And we at times have seen that just as you're going to get food but you know Christian approach to feeding the hungry is not to require that they've been married or hospitable or whatever. It

looks like he is killing two birds with one stone. We got these women who need to be on church support, but also they're the mothers in the church. So let's make them vocational ministers. And early on they are called the the altar of God. Church fathers refer to these widows. We see reference to them seated with the elders. So I think calling a woman an elder is like calling a mother a father. She has her own name. And her own term. And their own lane. At the same time, I would discourage men at Christian marriage conferences from teaching the wife verses that you sometimes see. The older women are told to teach the younger women how to be wives, and it could be a little offensive to for somebody who's never been a wife to be telling you how to be a wife. And I think Paul envisioned that there's a little more segregation there than we allow for. So there's encroachment, I think happening both ways. And again, I don't see a segregated church, but I do think that our embodiment is important in those ways. So bottom line, I would not see a woman as an elder, but I would see her in a parallel office.

Shea Houdmann

I think as we talked about and again, I would encourage our listeners to be sure to watch part one before watch just because a lot of what we're talking about here is informed by what we talked about in the first episode. It's vitally important for churches to be truly complementary, and that means men and women serving alongside each other, valuing each other, learning from each other under the guidance of the Godly Shepherds whom God has appointed to lead the church. One more passage that we need to dive into, just from the fact that we get a ton of questions about this one as well. And that's over in First Corinthians chapter 14, verses 33 to 35, which reads, as in all the congregations of the Saints, women should remain silent in the churches. They're not allowed to speak, but must be in submission as the law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home. For it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church. Now what's most interesting about this is even I've met some very patriarchal authoritarian men in churches, and I've never heard any of them say this passage actually means women have to remain absolutely silent in the church.

Doctor Sandra Glahn

Agree, yes.

Shea Houdmann

So from that extreme, which again I've never met anyone who holds that. There probably are people out there to the the other side, it's completely throwing this out, Paul doesn't mean this or it was added by a scribe later, or he's quoting something in order to deny it. I've heard the whole gamut, the in your study of this passage and what what have you learned that could be helpful for us in understanding it?

Doctor Sandra Glahn

Yeah. That's a great question. And I think the same thing happens in approaching this. That happens when you look at First Timothy two, and that is it really helps to look at the whole of scripture. And this was a little easier because three chapters earlier, Chapter 11 of First Corinthians, Paul is talking about when women pray and prophecy in the church. And whatever he means about the head coverings, and that's a whole other episode. But here's what he isn't raising, he's not saying should women prophecy in the church. It's a given that women are going to be speaking biblical content in the presence of the presence of men in a mixed congregation. So if we want to ask the question, can a man learn from a woman? Yes, the answer is yes, because we see this assumption that they're going to be prophets that

are women. And we've seen it all the way through redemption history. Right. You have Miriam, who's a prophet and Huldah, who's a prophet, and Anna, who's a prophet in the temple waiting on the redemption. And so did women have the gift of prophecy? Yes, Philip's daughters had that gift. That backdrop of the whole range of scripture and our tell us when we look at first, we look at Revelation, our men, the priests, no, we we even have the priesthood of all believers now that was like a rallying cry for for the Reformation.

Doctor Sandra Glahn

Women priests, what does a priest do? Priest brings people to God. Helps brings offerings. You know, Shepherds, souls. Whatever you want to what word you want to use to describe that. We are partners in this ministry. And so all of that informs then when you're coming to 1st Corinthians 11:14, I'm sorry, 1st Corinthians 14. You are looking at what is the context? He's been talking in 11 about what's happening in the church, women prophesying, praying. Then he stops everything and says wait before we go any further, love is essential here. Like, let us not lose track. And as you can speak with the tons of men and angels and it doesn't do you any good if you don't have love. You can have all kinds of prophecy. And it doesn't do you any good. OK, now that we've clarified love is the reigning principle, we're going to look at spiritual gifts. And I think that in the same way that the Corinthian Church was making tongues the gift, the American Church or the western Church has made teaching the gift. Being on the platform with the gift. Rather than imagining a house church where one person has a song, one has a praise, one has a teaching, one has a giving one, has an you know we're all bringing our gifts together. So we we got some cultural differences happening here too.

Doctor Sandra Glahn

But in the context of what's happening with spiritual gifts, Paul comes to the the subject of judging prophecies or vetting prophecies. And when it says, let them ask their husbands at home, it's not the usual word for just ask a simple question. It's more like the word for vet or grill. So and it's also if you're going to translate men, husbands that think you need to translate women as wives? So what we've done is we've said let the women keep silent and ask their husbands. So that's made it all women. And then the limited husbands, instead of saying, let the wives keep silent in the church and ask their husbands at home. And then you look at the work of Bruce Winter, who Roman widows, Roman wives, where he's saying, was there something that might have been a law lower case l, like civil law, not capital L Bible law, like the Law of Moses. There's nothing in the law of Moses that we can find that says a wife submits. But there's all kinds of stuff in Roman law that might suggest that it could be a violation in some way if a wife is publicly correcting her husband. So and is Paul concerned for the testimony of the church and you know how that's perceived? It seems more likely that Paul has a specific concern about judging prophecies in First Corinthians 11.

Shea Houdmann

And that's interesting because that's the the direction I've always been led on this passage, and in my study of it and that clearly, it's not talking about women being silent at all times, because that would contradict what you just said. You said a few chapters before and contradict many other things that we see described in the book of Acts are in the other epistles.

Doctor Sandra Glahn

Pentacost, right?

Shea Houdmann

In in this.

Doctor Sandra Glahn

I mean it's. Kind of. The spirit is the young daughters. You know, women and men, yeah.

Shea Houdmann

In this one specific instance of where here we are judging whether the validity of your prophecy that someone else has given in the church and we're limiting who can speak into that situation in a very specific example, not just not a universal principle of no one can speak. And I'm sure there if it had been an issue Paul would have said the children probably shouldn't be speaking in this incident as well, or just really thinking through what was going on and what was leading Paul to make this specific statements incredibly helpful in understanding what Paul means and what he doesn't mean by it.

Doctor Sandra Glahn

It's complicated, but it's also accessible I think right? Like you don't have to have a seminary degree to know that if you read that there's prophecy in Chapter 11 that he can't mean complete silence in chapter 14, right? And if you come to First Timothy two, when you go what's the background of Ephesus you don't have to be an Archaeologist to turn back to the book of Acts and see that Artemis of the Ephesians is a big deal in this city. That the text often gives us hints to how we can interpret it.

Shea Houdmann

Yeah, absolutely. So, Sandra, this conversation has been very encouraging to me. Obviously this is from having written my Masters thesis on these issues, to it being the number one question for the past 21 years at Got Questions, something I've thought through a lot and I'm always interested to hear how other people have been, who've studied it even more in depth than I have, the insights that they have. And I mean some of what you shared today and even in the part one are not something I've ever really thought through in the exact way you shared it. So I'm I'm not even. I'm not even 100%. Sure, if I agree. or disagree with you, but with the rest.

Doctor Sandra Glahn

Let's see. Legend keeps learning, right?

Shea Houdmann

Whether that's the case or not. I think we were talking before and we don't want anyone to come away from this thinking you have to divide from people whom you disagree with this. I think there are extreme issues on both sides where.

Doctor Sandra Glahn

The powerful street is full of issues to divide over. This isn't one of them.

Shea Houdmann

But from someone on extreme misogyny, patriarchal side to the extreme feminism side, where both are very unbiblical, and I think it is worth dividing those issues. But within the body of Christ, we can have differing opinions on what our conclusions are, how we work it out in practice while still fully embracing each other as brothers and sisters in Christ is. I mean, I've I know women who take a more conservative view on this issue than I do, and I know men who take a more liberal view on this issue than I do. So let's focus on it's a matter of biblical interpretation, not a matter of well, you think women can't serve as pastors of women just because you hate women or you think women can do anything in the church just because you hate the bible.

Doctor Sandra Glahn

Yes, yes.

Doctor Sandra Glahn

Right.

Shea Houdmann

It's like none of those extremes are true.

Doctor Sandra Glahn

Not helpful, not helpful.

Shea Houdmann

That's it's not helpful. As you said to go there.

Doctor Sandra Glahn

We are on the same page that we need to have a hermeneutic of charity. That these are issues where there is room for interpretation. We are not seeing there's room for interpretation on the nature of Jesus Christ or the nature of salvation, or the inerrancy of Scripture. We're saying there's room for interpretation on the application of some of these issues where Paul you know, even his own peers said he writes stuff that's hard to understand sometimes.

Shea Houdmann

It's still hard to understand nearly 2000 years later. So so Doctor Glahn, Sandra, thank you so much for joining in today. I've enjoyed both parts of our conversation. And again, please tune in, listen to part one is a very informative of the things we talked about here in Part 2. This has been the Got Questions podcast on Women in Ministry. Women pastors is a specific focus on the passage in First Timothy and then a few, little bit less on 1st Corinthians opens. Those are the two passages we definitely received the most questions about on this issue.

Doctor Sandra Glahn

Thank you for asking them and exploring them. It's a service to your listeners for sure.

Shea Houdmann

Sandra is a truly a blessing to have you on the show. We'll we'll do this again sometime soon. So got questions? The Bible has answers. And we'll help you find them.